

Information Architecture: What is it?

Gary Marchionini
UNC-SILS

Is it real?

- 3468 hits for 'information architect' on Monster.com on June 4, 2007
- The ASIST IA Summit March 2007 had almost 600 attendees (<http://www.iasummit.org/2007/>)
- The IA Listserv at ASIST
- SILS summer course

G. Marchionini, UNC-CH

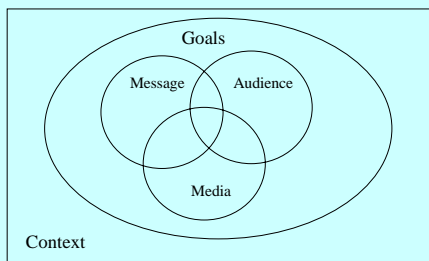
Who does it?

- Technical writers
- Graphics artists
- Architects
- Film makers
- Information specialists
 - librarians
 - publishers
 - web designers
 - database administrators

Why?

- Inform
 - scholarship
 - common good
 - instruction
- Persuade
 - advertise/promote/sell
 - control
- Entertain
 - passive
 - active
- Create

Factors



Context

- Cultural setting
 - social acceptance
 - timing
- Costs

Goals

- Transfer/Lookups
- Education
- Social Good
- Business
- Political/Legal

Messages

- Content (discipline, organization)
- Scope
- Complexity
- Novelty

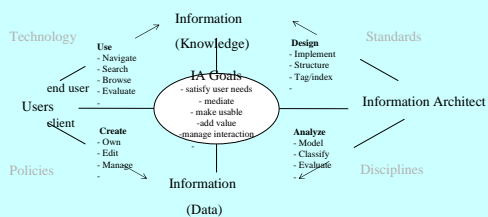
Audience

- Range (who, where, why)
- Knowledge base
- Experience base
- Receptivity (physical, mental, emotional)

Media

- Technical requirements
- Format
- Number of channels
- Transfer rate
- Degree of interaction

Information Architecture Model ver. 0.01 (IA Summit 2000)
(synthesis of ~900 terms)



Discussion Questions

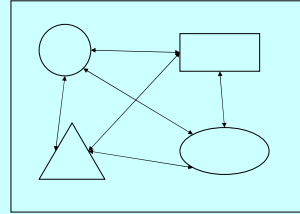
How is the electronic medium different from:
books/newspapers?
film/TV?
paintings/sculpture?

What are the implications
for users?
for designers?
for intermediaries?

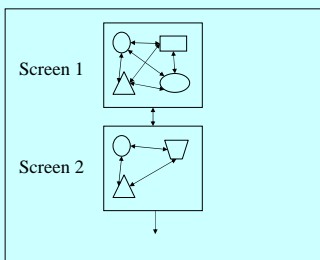
Design Process

- Mission definition
 - Problems/needs, materials, skills, vision
- Feasibility
 - Needs assessment, cost-benefit analysis
- Prototyping and evaluation
- Implementation
- Evaluation and maintenance

Information Packages



Aggregation of Packages



Smaller packages, more linkages

- Designing messages for electronic consumption suggests small chunks
 - Screen real estate limitations
 - Scroll, paging limits
- Hyperlinks give flexibility but also add cognitive load (lost in cyberspace)
- Implications of search engine entry points
- Everything is becoming more like a reference work and less like a novel??

G. Marchionini, UNC-CH

Packages

- Objects
 - physical attributes (e.g., size, color, shape, preiconographic)
 - conceptual attributes
 - denotation (e.g., iconographic)
 - connotation (e.g., iconological)
 - behavior (e.g., display, compute, compare)

Packages (cont')

- Relationships
 - Intrapackage relationships
 - physical (next page, see Figure X, position, order)
 - conceptual (anaphora)
 - Interpackage relationships
 - physical (citations)
 - conceptual (allusion, metaphor)

Packages (cont')

- Mechanisms
 - control
 - display (scroll, jump, zoom, hover)
 - usage monitor (histories, bookmarks)
 - query
 - analytical (with/without relevance feedback)
 - selection
 - dynamic
 - manipulation
 - cut and paste
 - add value (e.g., concordance, link plot)

Events

- Exchange cycle
 - e.g., a smile acknowledged, an http requested page returned
- Share cycle
 - perception, processing, comprehension of an information package by more than one [person/package/object]

WWW Design

- Know the audience
 - Universal access
- Iterative design and testing
 - Consider the development curve
- Organize, organize, organize
- Be consistent
- Appropriate use of media
 - Avoid gratuitous bells and whistles
- Leverage interactivity
 - Maintain interest
 - Gather feedback

Organizational Structures

- List
- Array
- Hierarchy
- Network
- Hybrids

Organizational Schemes

- Alphabetical
- Chronological
- Geographic
- Topical
- Numerical
- Administrative Parts/Units
- Importance, size
- Task
- User group
- Metaphor
- Random (feeling lucky)

Control Mechanisms (Navigation)

- Context (where am I?)
 - Consistency (layout, labeling, etc.)
- Links (types, labels)
- Input forms
- Menus
- Toolbars
- TOCs, sitemaps, tours
- Mouse events, zooms

Expression

- Words
 - Appropriate and controlled vocabulary
 - Clear, concise statements and prompts
- Images
 - Appropriate
 - Browser friendly
- Video, sound
 - Appropriate controls
- Interactivity and Flow

Planning

- Storyboards
- Scenarios
- Templates
- Feedback from users
- Maintenance
- Project Management

Implementation

- Tools
 - Wireframes
 - Software (e.g., Visio, Flowcharter)
- Evaluation
- Maintenance
 - Content management
 - Digital libraries